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ABSTRACT

Elementary school activities designed for celebraing the significant dates of each school month, excluding December, are described in this compilation. The collection covers birthdays of well-known people, historical events, mathematics, writing, reading, science, history, social studies, art, and cooking. (JW)

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# YOUR MONTHLY ACTIVITY ALMANAC.

[A PACKAGE OF SIGNIFICANT DATES TO LEARN ABOUT AND CELEBRATE]

A COMPILATION OF COLUMNS FROM SEVEN ISSUES OF "LEARNING" MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 1982 AND JANUARY TO APRIL/MAY 1983

Compiled by

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Washington, DC

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"How to Celebrate the First Month of School" by Sandra Nye

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A potpourri of events
to make Sept

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For those of us involved with school, September marks our annual opportunity for a new beginning. As teachers, we approach the opening day with renewed energy, a strengthened sense of commitment, and a resolve to try to strike the proper balance between the various ingredients of learning, blending them into a mixture that is both tasty and nourishing. When the children arrive—with excitement and some apprehension—most bring with them a desire to please and to do things right. Together we meet on that first day in our shared hope.

One of the challenges of September is to keep that hope alive—even after the excitement has faded and some of our carefully prepared concoctions prove indigestible. Our challenge is to meet our children on the edges of their understandings and to move with them from there, continually giving them opportunities to make their own fresh beginnings.

Among the prominent people who share September "beginnings" are Jane Addams, Grandma Moses, O. Henry, Jesse Owens, H. G. Wells, Michael Faraday, George Gershwin, Johnny Appleseed and Confucius. Events of historical significance that have anniversaries this month include several discoveries: Balboa claimed the Pacific Ocean for Spain in September 1513; Juan Cabrillo entered San Diego Bay and thus discovered California on September 28, 1542; and Henry Hudson, in September 1609, sailed into the river that now bears his name.

It was in this month that the Pilgrims began their voyage from England, on September 16, 1620. Nearly 250 years later, Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation (September 22, 1862), which stated that all persons held as slaves "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

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Other September dates commemorate record-breaking culinary achievements. The world's largest Popsicle—weighing 5,750 pounds—was made in Davenport, Iowa, on September 7, 1975; in Australia, on September 24 of that same year, the world's biggest hamburger was exhibited—2,859 pounds of beef formed into a patty over 27 feet in circumference—a record just broken this year. (You might ask your class to consider some of the problems involved in the preparation of such gigantic foods, then have them think of possible solutions.)

Several records of physical endurance were also set this month. In Albuquerque, N.M., on September 18, 1976, Jesse Castañeda walked 142 miles and 448 yards in 24 hours. On September 28, 1963, Giuseppe Cantarella of Italy set a world speed record on roller skates, skating 25.78 miles per hour. Your students might like to write arithmetic story problems based on these events.

September marks both the official and the unofficial ending of summer. Unofficially, the season ends with Labor Day, a holiday honoring American workers. Autumn officially begins at 3:46 a.m. EST on September 23. The month also holds two well-known Jewish holidays this year: Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the Jewish New Year, falls on September 17; and Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, occurs on September 26.

### Events and Activities

**September 11:** In 1971, Penny, a Rhode Island Red owned by Treena White of England, laid seven eggs. Many children may not recognize Penny's feat as unusual. Can anyone in your class explain the normal laying habits of chickens? This might be a good time to initiate an investigation into the kinds of foods that come from farm animals, and how those foods get from the farm to the consumer. Have students make posters

## WHAT'S SPECIAL

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of their findings, tracing the farm-to-supermarket path.

**September 12:** The first Sunday following Labor Day is Grandparents Day.

Discuss with children the reasons why this holiday was created. Talk about ways young people can show appreciation for grandparents and other older people who are important to them. What are some good activities children and older people can do together?

Have older students work in small groups to figure out this problem: If a generation is 30 years, and if you could invite to a family reunion all of your ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc.) from the time the Pilgrims landed in 1620 to the present, how many people would you have to invite?

Have the groups compare their answers and their methods for getting the answers. If the students enjoy the activity, look for a copy of *My Backyard History Book* by David Weitzman (Little, Brown, 1975) for related ideas and projects.

**September 14:** In 1752, Great Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar.

Because the Julian calendar, which the Britons had been using prior to the Gregorian changeover, was 11 days off, Parliament ruled that the day following September 2 would be September 14. The ruling caused an uproar among the British people, who felt cheated of 11 days. Discuss the incident with your students. Do they feel the Britons were justified in their anger? Why or why not? What would be your students' reaction if the U.S. government ruled that the day following September 14 would be September 26? What other 11-day periods during the year would students particularly miss? Are there any periods they would eliminate for one year?

**September 16:** Today is National Play-Doh Day, commemorating the introduction of Play-Doh in 1955.

The following is a simple recipe for a soft clay that can be used over and over again for all sorts of projects. You might let your class do the mixing while you take care of heating the oil and cooking. You might also divide the recipe in half before adding the coloring, and use two different colors.

| | |
|---|---|
| 8 T oil | 4 t cream of tartar |
| 4 c flour | 4 c water |
| 2 c salt | food coloring |

Heat the oil in a pan over medium heat. Mix all other ingredients well and pour into the hot oil. Stir over medium heat until the mixture pulls away from the sides of the pan, forming a ball. Let cool slightly, then knead. Store in plastic containers.

**September 19:** In 1928, *Steamboat Willie*, the first animated sound cartoon, premiered in New York City. It starred Mickey Mouse.

Prepare a model job-application form and give your children this assignment: You're Mickey Mouse and you're trying to get a job in the movies. What are your qualifications? What about you would appeal to moviegoers? List two references (Donald Duck might be one), and write a few sentences telling what each might say about you.

Have the children conduct a class survey to find out who their favorite cartoon characters are. Based on their survey results, who would they predict to be the entire school's favorite? How many children do they think would name this character as a favorite? Have them check their predictions by polling the school.

**September 23:** Today is the autumnal equinox, when the sun rises directly in the east at the equator and sets directly in the west, causing a day with equal hours of light and dark.

Beginning on this day in the northern hemisphere, the days will grow shorter and cooler, and the earth will undergo changes—some subtle, some dramatic. To encourage children's awareness of the changes in the natural world, have them keep nature journals. For a few weeks, suggest that they write daily accounts of the things they observe—animals, plants, constellations. Have them keep calendars on which they draw the moon as they see it each night, and on which they record each day's high and low temperatures, as well as the times of sunrise and sunset. (This information is in the newspaper.) When the period of record keeping is over, have them graph the temperatures and the times of sunrise and sunset. Do the graphs help them visualize the changes taking place in autumn?

**September 24:** This is the day when the world's largest hamburger was exhibited in Australia in 1975. Help your children to comprehend how big a 2,859-pound hamburger is with these activities:

The hamburger's circumference was about 27 feet. With your class, find a way to make a circle this size on the playground.

Figure out how many quarter-pounders could be made from 2,859 pounds of meat. Then figure out how many hamburgers that would be for each child in the class. If the children had one hamburger each for lunch every day, how long would it take them to eat all their hamburgers?

*News update:* A record-breaking 3,591-pound hamburger (16 feet across) was cooked and devoured last June in Rutland, N.D.

**September 25:** September is a noteworthy month for newspapers. In 1690, *Publick Occurances, Both Foreign and Domestic*, the first newspaper published in America, made its only appearance. Its publisher's stated intention was to expose people who started false rumors; authorities in Boston suppressed the paper immediately. Almost a century later, in 1784, America's first daily newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* began publication; and 67 years after that, the first copy of *The New York Times* was issued, in 1851.

If you're interested in making newspaper reading a part of your curriculum, here's one way to structure the activity: Divide the class into groups of four and explain that each group will be responsible for finding four different kinds of news stories—one describing a national event, one an event of local significance, one focusing on a person or persons (human interest), and one sports or entertainment item. Each group member then looks for one newspaper story that fits one of the four categories, reads it, and explains it to the other members of the group, being prepared to answer any questions that may arise. Following discussion of the stories, the group members prepare brief written summaries of their stories to be presented to the class.

For younger children, choose easy-to-comprehend news stories to read aloud and discuss. Or have youngsters prepare a "news chart" of daily activities and events in the class, and keep each day's record to provide reading material throughout the year. ■

*Sandra Nye is an elementary school teacher in West Babylon, N.Y., and is on the faculty of the Learning Institute.*

Beginning next issue, a regular *Learning* department will provide you and your students with ideas and activities for celebrating the month.

# How To Celebrate October

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about October? Or January or April or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students. It is also a package of significant dates to celebrate and learn about.*

*"How To Celebrate October" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes this month special. Following the overview are additional dates and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

## A Look at October

October is a month of dramatic natural changes in many parts of our country. It's a time when leaves turn from shades of green to warm, brilliant colors of autumn, and when migratory birds fly south. Introduce this month of changes by helping your children prepare a bulletin board of information about bird migrations. Include a map showing the major flyways of North American birds, along with illustrations of the kinds of birds that use each route. Locate the winter destinations of these birds and graph the distances that various birds travel.

October is also the harvest month, when farmers rush to gather their crops before the first frost occurs. Apples, corn and pumpkins are three autumn harvest crops that receive special recognition in October. Pumpkins, of course, figure prominently in Halloween festivities, and this is both National Popcorn Poppin' Month and National Apple Month.

Two major holidays fall in October: Columbus Day, celebrated on October 11 this year, and Halloween, on Sunday, October 31. October 31 is also the day that clocks are turned back an hour, as daylight saving time ends and standard time resumes.

## Events and Activities

**October 1:** National Popcorn Poppin' Month begins today.

Popcorn was known thousands of years ago to the Indians of both Americas. An Indian named Quadequina took a deerskin bag filled with popped corn to the Pilgrim's first Thanksgiving celebration.

Read your class *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie de Paola (Holiday House, 1978). It gives a brief history of popcorn along with the reason popcorn pops. Present some statistics about the expansion of popcorn kernels (white corn pops to about 25 times its original size, yellow corn to about 32 times, although there's a special yellow variety that expands to about 44 times its original size). Then involve your class in some estimating.

Set out ¼ cup of unpopped corn and three containers of distinctly different sizes. Have the children predict which of the containers the corn will fill once it is popped, based on the information previously discussed. (Work this out beforehand so you'll have a container of the right capacity.)

**October 12:** Today the World Series is scheduled to begin.

Take advantage of the annual preoccupation with baseball and baseball players to explore basic interviewing techniques. Throughout the series, encourage students to read and listen to interviews of baseball players.

Following a discussion of interviewing techniques, set up a situation in which one student poses as a baseball player while another student interviews him or her (or you pose as the player, if that seems more appropriate). Give the interviewing children time to brainstorm questions beforehand. During the interview, those being questioned can make up fanciful answers, but they shouldn't give away any more information than the questions call for.

**October 15:** Today is World Poetry Day, chosen in honor of Vergil, the Roman poet born in 70 B.C.

Plan with your class to illustrate and tape a selection of poems to present in commemoration of Poetry Day. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group the task of contributing one humorous poem and one serious poem to the collection.

Assemble a wide range of poetry forms and sources. Over a period of several days, set aside a time for the groups to read through some of the sources of appealing poems.

Ask the children to discuss the poems they've chosen. What words or phrases most vividly create pictures or evoke feelings? How might these images or sensations be illustrated? Following this discussion period, have the children illustrate their poems.

Next have the groups choose two members among them to read and tape-record their two selections. After the groups have completed their illustrations and taping, they're ready to come together for a whole class poetry presentation, with one student displaying the illustrations as the tapes play. The presentation might be welcomed in other classes as well.

**October 20:** On this date in 1967, Roger Patterson photographed a creature that he claimed was a Bigfoot.

Hold a discussion about Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, and other such elusive creatures that people purport to have seen but for which there is no proof of existence. Do your children believe these creatures are real? If so, do they find such creatures frightening?

Although most children are probably not afraid of these particular creatures, they likely have other fears they might want to talk about. What are some of the fears your students have? Do they know how or why they acquired them? How do they handle them? Does understanding a fear help alleviate it? Are there some fears they believe they'll outgrow?

**October 27:** Today is the birthday of Theodore Roosevelt, born in 1858.

Roosevelt was a hunter. After an occasion on which he refused to shoot a bear cub, a cartoonist drew a picture that gave a toy maker an idea. The toy maker, Morris Michtom, and his wife designed a stuffed bear on which they hung a sign reading "Teddy's Bear."

Invite younger children to celebrate Roosevelt's birthday by bringing a favorite stuffed animal to school. Let them talk about their animals, draw pictures of them, and write stories with their animals as central characters. Read them *Corduroy* by Don Freeman (Viking, 1968; Penguin, 1976). ■

*Sandra Nye is an elementary school teacher in West Babylon, N.Y., and is on the faculty of the Learning Institute.*

# How To Celebrate November

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about November? Or January or April or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students. It is also a package of significant dates to celebrate and learn about.*

*"How To Celebrate November" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes this month special. Following the overview are additional dates and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

**A Look at November**

November's traditionally gray, chilly weather may not inspire one to take to the skies, but November *is* Aviation History Month, marking the bicentennial anniversary of aeronautical experiments done in 1782 by Joseph Michel and Jacques Étienne Montgolfier, brothers who filled fabric-and-paper bags with hot air and smoke to make them rise. Their experiments led to the invention of the hot-air balloon, the first airplane and the entire science of aviation. On November 21, 1783, only a year after the Montgolfiers' first experiments, Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis François Laurent d'Arlandes became the first men to fly, when they ascended to a height of about 3,000 feet above Paris in a Montgolfier hot-air balloon. Their flight lasted more than 20 minutes and covered a distance of more than 5 miles.

On November 14, 1889, Nellie Bly, a young reporter (whose real name was Elizabeth Cochrane), set out to beat the around-the-world travel time of Phileas Fogg, the hero of Jules Verne's science-fiction adventure *Around the World in 80 Days*. She was successful in this endeavor, completing her journey in 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes and 14 seconds. (See the November 14 entry in the Events and Activities section.)

John Philip Sousa, Marie Curie, Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), Daniel Boone, Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Fulton, Louisa May Alcott, Abigail Adams and Winston Churchill are among the famous people with November birthdays. It's also the birthday month of Carlo Lorenzini (known as Carlo Collodi), the Italian author of *The Adventures of Pinnochio*.

November 21, 1815, was the birthday of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, which was formed in 1869 with the purpose of securing for women the right to vote. This right was finally granted in August 1920, with ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Women voted in their first presidential election the following November.

**Events and Activities**

**November 6:** James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, was born on this date in 1861.

Naismith was a physical education instructor at Springfield College in Massachusetts. Asked by the head of his department to devise an active game that could be played indoors during winter months, Naismith tacked two peach baskets to the gym balcony, divided his players into two teams of nine each, and provided a soccer ball for play. Since that first game in 1891, the equipment and rules of basketball have changed considerably, and the game has grown into one of America's favorite sports.

Give your children some practice in both shooting baskets and applying arithmetic skills. Use wadded paper for a basketball and a wastebasket as a goal. Pair younger children; while one child shoots baskets, the other keeps score: 2 points per basket, 5 shots (or whatever other numbers you wish). Have older students determine the percentage of baskets made in 10 shots.

**November 7:** The Museum of Modern Art opened in New York City in 1929.

One of the developments of modern art, dating from experiments made by such artists as Picasso and Braque in the early 1900s, is the collage, a picture or design created by gluing pieces of paper or other materials onto a surface.

Let your children experiment with this art form by making collages with an autumn or Thanksgiving theme. Children can work individually or in small groups, cutting pictures from magazines to create collages showing things for which they're thankful. Or, to commemorate the harvest season, they might try the following procedure:

Brush a piece of white tagboard with rubber cement and apply pieces of colored tissue paper to create a background representing the earth, sky and farm buildings. Then apply glue in rows on the ground area, and press on dried foods such as corn, rice, beans and seeds to represent growing crops.

**November 8:** National Split Pea Soup Week begins today.

Relieve the bleakness of November's weather, and provide the children with some experience in planning, organizing and cooking: enjoy a meal of split pea soup with your class. The recipe given below, accompanied by milk, bread and butter, should serve 10 to 12 children.

With these figures in mind, have children determine how much of each ingredient they'll need in order to make soup for the class, as well as the amount of bread, butter and milk they will need. After pricing each item at a supermarket (perhaps someone will donate cloves, bay leaves, salt and the vegetables), students are to figure out the total cost of the food, and the amount of money each person needs to contribute to cover its cost. Have them determine the jobs involved in preparing, cooking, serving and cleaning up, and let them decide who will do what.

To make split pea soup for 10 to 12, you will need: 1 lb. split peas, well washed; 1 meaty ham bone; 2 quarts water; 1 whole onion, stuck with two cloves; 1 rib celery; 2 carrots, sliced; 2 garlic cloves; 1 bay leaf; salt to taste.

Combine all ingredients except salt, and bring to a boil. Cover the pot tightly, reduce heat and cook for 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Remove and discard the garlic, onion and cloves. Cut off and dice the meat from the ham bone. Salt to taste.

Make the soup a day ahead; if it thickens too much overnight, thin with water or milk when reheating.

Students should also know that



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# How to Celebrate

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occasions such as Split Pea Soup Week exist for commercial purposes and are generally sponsored by an association.

**November 11:** Veterans Day.

Originally, Veterans Day was known as Armistice Day, because it was the anniversary of the signing of the armistice in 1918, which ended World War I. It was a day of remembrance for all those who had given their lives in the war. In 1954, President Eisenhower signed a bill calling for recognition of the dead of World War II and of the Korean War as well. Today we observe Veterans Day by honoring all men and women who have served in our armed forces.

Develop with your children a list of questions they'd like to ask a war veteran. Then either invite someone to your class to answer the questions, or let children who know people who have served in wars conduct interviews to report on to the class.

**November 14:** Nellie Bly sails from New York in 1889 to beat the *Around the World in 80 Days* record of Jules Verne's hero Phileas Fogg.

Bly's attention-grabbing feat is ripe for research. Have students first brainstorm all the modes of transportation available to the 22-year-old newspaper reporter in 1889. (Remind children, if necessary, that the airplane had not yet been invented.) Then have students conduct research to find out just what kinds of transportation Bly did use to accomplish her venture. (This will likely lead to further research, since few students will know what a *jinrikisha* or a *sampan* is.) Finally, ask students to create illustrations showing all the different modes of transportation Nellie Bly used.

**November 15:** Word Banishment Nominations will be accepted for one month, beginning today, by the Unicorn Hunters of Lake Superior State College in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Words to be nominated are those that people feel are misused, overused and abused. Have students compile a list of words they feel fall into these categories. (You might give them some suggestions to get them started thinking.) Then have them consider substitutes that are fresher and more precise in meaning by using a dictionary and thesaurus. Encourage them to avoid using the "banished" words in their speaking and writing, and to use instead the substitute words and other phrases they feel are not so timeworn.

**November 21:** The Mother Goose Parade is held today in El Cajon, Calif.

Read aloud some Mother Goose rhymes to your children. Then help them develop a rhyming dictionary. Give small groups of children several words for which they are to think of rhyming words. When they have all the words they can think of, help them check the spellings. Then have them copy the words on pages for their dictionary. Can they find patterns in the spelling of words that rhyme with each other?

**November 25:** Thanksgiving Day.

The Pilgrims seem to have begun the American practice of celebrating Thanksgiving with a feast. (At least one group of colonists observed Thanksgiving before the Pilgrims did, but their observance was strictly religious and involved no feasting.) Today a holiday meal with family or friends is a tradition for most of us. Discuss with children the ways their families generally celebrate Thanksgiving. What other traditions do they celebrate? Do some children have traditions peculiar to their own families; and if so, how did these traditions begin? Talk about the value of traditions to families and to nations.

**November 26:** On this date in 1716, the first lion shown in America was exhibited in Boston.

Begin a study about animals typically found in zoos. Provide younger children with picture books showing these animals and, using a map, show the children where each of the different animals comes from. Then let them create their own zoo, using clay to model the animals, and small building blocks or stones to structure enclosures.

Older children could discuss the practice of keeping animals in traditional zoos and in wildlife parks, like the San Diego Wild Animal Park. How do they feel about it? What regulations are there to protect these animals in the wild?

Everybody would probably enjoy *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1950). Gerald McGrew, the boy in the story, thinks the animals ordinarily seen in zoos are dull, so he creates his own outrageous animals to populate McGrew's zoo. Have children invent animals, name them and explain what makes them extraordinary. ▪

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*Sandra Nye is an elementary school teacher in West Babylon, N.Y.*

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# How To Celebrate January

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about January? Or March or April or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students. It is also a package of significant dates to celebrate and learn about.*

*"How To Celebrate January" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes this month special. Following the overview are additional dates and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

## A Look at January

Even in ancient times, when years were measured by such natural phenomena as the flooding of the Nile or the run of the salmon, rather than with calendars, the new year was a cause for celebration. But not until early in this century, by which time most countries had adopted the Gregorian calendar, did everyone begin celebrating the new year on the same date. Today, notwithstanding special new year celebrations based on other calendars (the Jewish Rosh Hashanah, for example, or the Chinese New Year), January 1 is observed worldwide as New Year's Day. Investigate with your class past and present ways of greeting the new year. Suggest to students that they use the library and that they talk with relatives and neighbors.

During the coming year, the earth will travel about 583,416,000 miles in its elliptical path around the sun, an average distance of 1,598,400 miles per day. Figure how many miles the earth travels per hour, per minute, per second. Then, using a road map, locate two familiar places (your town and a well-known city, for example) that are about the same distance apart as the distance the earth travels in one second. Ask students to imagine traveling between these two places in just one second.

Amelia Earhart didn't travel at earth's dizzying speed when she made the first solo flight by a woman across the Pacific Ocean on January 11, 1935 (from Honolulu to Oakland, Calif.), but her feat was nonetheless impressive. Other January firsts for women: On January 23, 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell earned her M.D., becoming the first woman physician in America. In the area of politics, Nellie Ross became the first woman governor, in Wyoming, on January 5, 1925. Seven years later, Hattie Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman to be elected a U.S. senator.

Birthdays in January include those of two men important to children's literature: Jacob Grimm, who with his brother, Wilhelm, collected and recorded German fairy tales; and Charles Perrault, who collected and retold *Tales of Mother Goose*. Read several of these tales to students. Let younger students act them out. Older students might try their hands at rewriting a few fairy tales, updating them to the present.

## Events and Activities

**January 1:** New Year's Day.

Traditionally, January 1 is a day for making resolutions. Benjamin Franklin (whose birthday was January 17, by the way) summed up the feeling most of us have toward resolutions when he said, "Good resolutions are easier made than executed." When your class reconvenes for the new year, discuss Franklin's observation and encourage students to talk about their experiences in trying to set goals and achieve them. Ask each child to write one resolution for the coming year. Put the resolutions aside. Once or twice before the month is over, have children evaluate their progress in keeping their resolutions.

**January 3:** The waxed paper drinking straw was patented in 1888.

Give young children straws and cups of water for experimenting. Have them suck water through their straws and try to figure out why they're able to do this. Do they know why blowing through a straw into the water produces bubbles? If they stick their straws into the water and cover the tops with their fingers, why does the water remain in the straws? Why does it fall out when they remove their fingers?

Older children can use straws to investigate principles of construction. *Messing Around With Drinking Straw Construction* by Bernie Zubrowski (Little, Brown, 1981) puts children in the role of problem solvers as they build models of houses and bridges, then test them to determine where braces should be added to provide stability and strength.

**January 5:** Today is George Washington Carver Day, celebrated in memory of Carver's death in 1943.

The son of a slave woman owned by Moses Carver during the Civil War, the multitalented and industrious George Washington Carver grew up to become an internationally known agricultural chemist. Among his other accomplishments, he was responsible for the development of over 300 products derived from peanuts, and for changing the agricultural patterns of the South.

To honor this famous scientist, tell or read his life story (a simply told version is Aliki's *A Weed Is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver* [Prentice-Hall, 1965]). And if you have access to a blender or food processor, make peanut butter to spread on crackers for a celebratory snack. You can either blend the peanuts alone or, for a smoother consistency, blend one tablespoon of oil with each cup and a half of peanuts.

**January 12:** On January 12, 1879, glass bottles were first used for milk delivery.

Have students find out how milk was delivered before this date. In what different ways is it packaged today? Discuss the issue of refundable versus nonrefundable containers.

Packaging has become a major consideration in the merchandising of modern-day products. Packages are designed not just to hold products, but to sell them. Have students collect an assortment of packages from items purchased in the supermarket. Give small groups of students several different packages in which the same basic product is sold (one group might have cereal boxes, another juice cans, another frozen-food packages, etc.), and ask them to rank the packages in order of their appeal. What is it about various packages that attracts people? Do students think these features indicate anything

about the quality of the products inside? On what basis do they select a product—packaging, price, media advertising, comparison of label information, or other factors?

As a follow-up activity, have children collect and bring to school for one week all the supermarket packaging they feel is unnecessary for preserving a product in a clean, safe condition.

**January 15:** Martin Luther King, Jr., was born in Georgia on January 15, 1929.

In 1964, Martin Luther King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to secure equal civil rights for all Americans. Discuss with students the discrimination that prompted the movement King led. Read and talk about these words from the famous speech he delivered in Washington, D.C., in 1963: "I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

To help older students understand something of the emotional impact of prejudice and its effect on people's lives, read them Mildred D. Taylor's Newbery Award–winning book *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Dial, 1976). (Also, see this month's *Learning* posters.)

**January 18:** A.A. Milne, author of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, was born in England in 1882.

When Piglet asked Pooh what was the first thing he said to himself when he awoke in the morning, Pooh answered, "What's for breakfast?" Celebrate today in true-Pooh fashion by preparing a simple meal together from *The Pooh Cook Book* by Virginia H. Ellison (Dell, 1975). In addition to recipes, the book contains reading selections, mostly about food, that children might take turns reading aloud either before or after the meal.

**January 23:** Today is National Handwriting Day, observed on John Hancock's birthday.

Do your children know who John Hancock was, and why a signature came to be known as a John Hancock?

The Monday following National Handwriting Day might be a good day to consider our two principal systems of writing: print and cursive. (Italics, although used less commonly, should also be mentioned.) Take a poll to see which system students prefer. What are some reasons for using cursive over print? (If speed is mentioned, have students devise an exercise to test the two systems for speed.) What are the benefits of print over cursive? If students are divided in their preferences, let them debate the question of whether or not everyone should be required to learn both writing systems.

**January 24:** Elisabeth Achelis, creator of "The World Calendar," was born in 1880.

Calendars have long been a matter of concern to those interested in having things run in as orderly a fashion as possible. Calendar reform advocate Elisabeth Achelis devised a calendar she felt would clear up the muddle caused by our present calendar, with its months of varying lengths and its floating holidays. Her calendar is divided into four quarters, with the first month in each quarter having 31 days and the other two months having 30 days each. The calendar has exactly 52 weeks (364 days), with an extra day at the end of December, called Worldsday, to be celebrated as an international holiday. During leap years, another Worldsday is added at the end of June. Every year begins on Sunday; and holidays, birthdays—all dates, in fact—fall on the same day every year. Obtain a copy of "The World Calendar" and see how your students feel about it. Do they foresee the world adopting it one day?

*This Book Is About Time*, a Brown Paper School Book by Marilyn Burns (Little, Brown, 1978), contains, in addition to "The World Calendar," a wealth of fascinating information about calendars and time in general. ■

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# How To Celebrate February

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about February? Or March or April or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students. It is also a package of significant dates to celebrate and learn about.*

*"How To Celebrate February" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes this month special. Following the overview are additional dates and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

**A Look at February**

February is a month to focus on birthdays. Along with Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, many other noteworthy people were born this month. Students might prepare a who's who of February-born men and women, providing brief biographical sketches for each entry.

The entries might include: Copernicus, Galileo and Charles Darwin, three men whose scientific theories unsettled and reshaped our views of the world; Horace Greeley, a journalist who, in the 1800s, still saw the West as a land of promise and (popularizing a phrase coined in 1851 by an Indiana newspaperman) advised the jobless of New York City to "go west, young man"; Susan B. Anthony, advocate for women's right to vote; and Ralph Nader, consumer advocate.

As February has been designated Afro-American History Month, it's an appropriate time to study black Americans born this month. They include singer Marian Anderson, W.E.B. DuBois, Hank Aaron and Langston Hughes. Hughes, a poet, wrote these words: "Hold fast to dreams/For if dreams die/Life is a broken-winged bird/That cannot fly." Let children discuss what they think Hughes meant, and invite them to tell what "dreams" they have.

Valentine's Day is a big February attraction. Before the day arrives, let your class plan its celebration. Tomie de Paola's book *Things To Make and Do for Valentine's Day* (Watts, 1976) might be helpful; it explains and illustrates how to make valentines using Styrofoam prints, how to make a valentine mailbag, and how to make presents from baker's clay. It also contains riddles and tongue twisters with a valentine theme.

**Events and Activities:**

**February 9:** The U.S. Weather Bureau was established in 1870.

Long before there were professional meteorologists to predict the weather, people relied on all sorts of signs in the natural world for determining what kind of weather lay ahead. Sometimes they composed verses based on their observations and predictions, and although some of these verses are groundless, others are based on scientific truth.

Read your class *A January Fog Will Freeze a Hog*, edited by Hubert David (Crown, 1977), and discuss its weather folklore. In addition to its 30 verses, it has notes explaining the factual basis of many of the verses.

Have young children observe the sky each morning for several weeks and make predictions about the probability of rain. Keep a record, using picture symbols, of how the sky looks each morning, as well as of the actual weather conditions that occur that day. Are there any reliable indicators of coming fair or foul weather?

**February 13:** The first magazine published in America, *The American Magazine*, was issued in Philadelphia in 1741.

The making of a magazine is a worthwhile ongoing class project for any grade. Save children's stories, poems, reports, riddles, etc., as they are written throughout the rest of the year. A month or so before school ends, let children choose the best samples of their work for inclusion in the magazine. (A committee of children can help select the material to be published.) Then have small groups edit this material, putting to work skills learned over the year. After it has been rewritten and proofread,

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# Celebrate February

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either type it or let children print it, leaving room for illustrations to be added by class artists. Run off enough copies of your magazine to give one to each class member, with additional copies for the school library and your own classroom.

**February 21:** The first United States telephone book was circulated in 1878; it was issued by the New Haven Telephone Company.

Divide children into groups of four. Have each child write his telephone number in the way we usually write seven-digit numerals, using commas to separate the millions, thousands and hundreds. Ask each group to arrange its four numbers in order from smallest to largest. How many addition examples (each with two addends) can four children write using their telephone numbers? How many subtraction examples?

How many names are listed in the white pages of your community's phone directory? Ask children to find a way to make a reasonable estimate, then discuss their procedures.

**February 23:** Today is the birthday of Samuel Pepys, born in England in 1633.

For nearly ten years, Pepys kept a diary in which he recorded details of his personal and professional life, along with descriptions of important historical events of his era. What made his diary so famous was that it was written in an elaborate code, deciphered two centuries after his death.

Set aside ten minutes a day when children can make entries in a diary of their own. On most days let them write whatever they wish; other days you might assign a topic or a specific writing form (a letter, an imaginary dialogue, etc.). Be sure children understand that their diaries are to be private—unless they wish to share something they've written.

**February 26:** Grand Canyon National Park was established in 1919.

Display a map of our national parks. Let small groups of children study various parks to discover what makes each unique in terms of its geographical features, flora and fauna. What value can children see in preserving national parks? What problems currently threaten our national parks? What solutions can they suggest to these problems? ■

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# How To Celebrate March

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about March? Or January or April or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students. It is also a package of significant events to learn about and celebrate—at any time during the month.*

*"How To Celebrate March" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes this month special. Following the overview are additional events and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

## A Look at March

Nature provides its own beginnings in March, as the North Pole leans once again toward the sun, and increasing warmth and daylight prompt stirrings of new life. Skunk cabbages and pussy willows bloom, wood frogs begin to chirp, and robins return to northern regions. Encourage children's sensitivity to these and other signs of spring, both by reading about the season's transformations and by firsthand observation of them.

In spite of its promise of new life, March can be tempestuous and destructive. In March 1888, a three-day blizzard raged in the eastern United States, causing 400 deaths. In March 1925, 689 people were killed by a tornado that cut a wide swath through parts of Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. Let children research the causes and effects of such extreme forms of weather.

March is Red Cross Month, National Nutrition Month (see "Contemporary Issues for Young Citizens" in this issue), and Youth Art Month. Weeks worthy of celebration include Women's History Week (March 6–12), National Music in Our Schools Week (March 7–13), National Poison Prevention Week (March 13–19) and National Wildlife Week (March 20–26).

## Events and Activities

**The Arts Are Fine.** Youth Art Month is celebrated in March. Prepare for an end-of-March art exhibit by your students. Gather together as many books for children as you can find describing a variety of art mediums and techniques, as well as books of artwork reproductions. Let children help collect art materials and tools, including paints of different kinds, crayons, felt markers, chalk, pen and ink, clay, and materials for needlework, prints and collages.

To start children thinking about different ways of expressing feelings and ideas artistically, check out *Wonders, Warriors and Beasts Abounding: How the Artist Sees His World* by Beryl Barr (Doubleday, 1967). The reproductions of artwork in this book offer a view of the many ways a subject can be expressed artistically.

Along with producing their own art, children might study the lives and works of Vincent Van Gogh, Michelangelo, and photographer Edward Steichen, three artists born in March.

**Green Thumbs Up.** Luther Burbank, an American horticulturist who spent his life improving existing plants and developing new ones, was born on March 7, 1849. Among the new plants he developed is the Shasta daisy, which, along with the sunflower, was being considered by the ninety-seventh Congress to become our national flower. (The ninety-eighth Congress may reintroduce the issue of selecting a national flower.)

Have children locate resources that illustrate these two flowers and make a poster picturing them, with captions telling about each. Exhibit the poster for other classes in your school, and conduct a poll to determine the school's favorite of the flowers. Have your class send the results of the poll, along with individual letters stating each class member's own preference and reasons for that preference, to the members of Congress who represent your district.

Celebrate both Burbank's birthday and the approach of spring by planting seeds. Choose quick-sprouting seeds such as lima beans and radishes, or let children plant seeds from foods they eat. You might also graph the growth of plants and record changes in them, or conduct simple experiments aimed at showing what plants need for growth.

**Freedom for All.** Harriet Tubman, born into slavery in about the year 1821, died on March 10, 1913.

A memorial near Harriet Tubman's home in Auburn, N.Y., reads:

*Called the "Moses" of her people*
*During the Civil War, with rare*
*Courage, she led over three*
*hundred*
*Negroes up from slavery to freedom*
*And rendered invaluable service*
*As nurse and spy. . . .*

In later life, after years spent helping slaves traverse the underground railroad to safety and serving as nurse, spy and scout during the Civil War, Tubman worked to raise money for schools for newly freed slaves. Two books children might read are *Runaway Slave: The Story of Harriet Tubman* by Ann McGovern (Scholastic, 1965) and, for older children, *Harriet Tubman: Guide to Freedom* by Sam and Beryl Epstein (Garrard, 1968).

**A Quiet Gesture.** Marcel Marceau, French master of mime, was born in France on March 22, 1923. Mime is a dramatic form that generally employs actions to the exclusion of words. Provide brief periods when children can perform mime. Young children can pretend to be animals or plants, or can mimic people engaged in various activities. A box of simple props can stimulate imaginations. Or provide an empty box, and let children take turns imagining that a particular item is in the box, taking it out and playing with it, then returning it. Encourage the audience for these pantomimes to wait until the end of each performance to guess the object or action.

**Classroom Cuisine.** Fannie Farmer, the first cookbook author to use standard measurements, was born on March 23, 1857. Before her time, recipes called for such measurements as "butter the size of an egg" or "a handful of flour." Let children invent their own recipes—for something actually edible or for something fanciful, such as Witch's Brew or Leprechaun Stew—using standard measurements and giving specific instructions for mixing and cooking. ■

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# How To Celebrate April and May

BY SANDRA NYE

*What's so special about April? Or May? Or any other month of the year for that matter? Each month provides the chance for a fresh start in your classroom, a new beginning for you and your students—even when it is close to the year's end. Each month is also a package of significant dates to learn about and celebrate.*

*"How To Celebrate April and May" begins with an overview that provides an insight into what makes these months special. Following the overview are additional events and ideas for classroom learning activities.*

**A Look at April and May**

"April showers bring May flowers" goes the familiar rhyme; and these two months, which bring spring to its full bloom, are an ideal time for investigating both showers and flowers. Have children make a rain gauge by marking off 15 centimeters with a waterproof pen on a strip of waterproof tape, then attaching the tape (with zero at the bottom) to the outside of a wide-mouthed jar. Leave the jar in an open area, check it after each rainfall, and keep a graph of the results of spring rains.

Spring is a good time to study microhabitats in the neighborhood. *Small Worlds: A Field Trip Guide* by Helen Ross Russell (Little, Brown, 1972); *Nature Activities for Early Childhood* by Janet Nickelsburg (Addison-Wesley, 1976); and *Nature With Children of All Ages* by Edith A. Sisson (Prentice-Hall, 1982) are all excellent sources of suggestions for studying the natural world.

On the subject of excursions into the wild, several well-known expeditions came to successful ends during April and May. Robert E. Peary and his party, after five failed attempts, finally reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909. Charles Lindbergh made his solo flight across the Atlantic in May 1927; and on May 28, 1967, Sir Francis Chichester completed his solo trip around the world by boat. A party led by Edmund Hillary became the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest in May 1953; and in May 1975, Junko Tabei, a Japanese mountaineer, became the first woman to scale the mountain.

Special days include Easter, which falls on April 3 this year; Mother's Day (May 8); and Memorial Day (May 30). At 2:00 a.m. on the last Sunday of April, daylight saving time begins.

**Events and Activities**

**A Time for Books.** International Children's Book Day and the birthday of Hans Christian Anderson provide an excellent opportunity to promote children's understanding of people of other cultures. Gather together and display for your students books about people of other countries and cultures. Encourage children, as they read these books, to note the differences between themselves and the people in the books, as well as the similarities. Discuss how people's differences can enrich life rather than threaten it.

**It's All in the Game.** A monster-size Monopoly game—with a gameboard 550 square feet—was set up in Huntingdon, Pa., on April 29, 1967. Give your math class an exercise in figuring ratio by providing calculators, measuring tools, a regulation Monopoly set and these questions to answer: If the Huntingdon Monopoly gameboard was 550 square feet, what was the size of each of the individual properties and of the four corner squares? What would the dimensions of the money, the title cards, and the Community Chest and Chance cards be? (To make figuring easier, suggest that students round off the measurements of the equipment in the standard set to the nearest quarter inch.) What size would the dice, the houses and hotels, and the playing pieces be?

**May Day Is Law Day.** Discuss with your class the reasons that societies have laws, and some of the ways that laws evolve. Also discuss the complexity of laws—both the difficulty in writing clear, fair laws and the difficulty in interpreting them. To illustrate this complexity, divide the class into groups, and ask each group to write and post one rule for the classroom. After the rules are posted, talk about them. Do children interpret them in different ways? Do the rules contain loopholes or ambiguities? Is it desirable to have open-ended laws?

For an entertaining look at law, read *You Can't Eat Peanuts in Church and Other Little-Known Laws* by Barbara Seuling (Doubleday, 1975).

**Focus on Composers.** The first week of May is an appropriate time to introduce (or reintroduce) children to a few of the great composers. On May 7, 1824, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* was performed for the first time. Play this symphony for your class (the public library may have a recording of it), and let children react to it. What images and feelings does the music evoke? Allow children, if they wish, to express their reactions to the various parts of the music through movement, pictures or in writing.

May 7 is also the birthday of Johannes Brahms (1833) as well as of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840), whose *Nutcracker Suite* is probably familiar to most children. They may also have heard Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, but it's a good time to play it anyway; it premiered in the USSR on May 2, 1936. (A fine film version of *Peter and the Wolf* is available from Pyramid Film and Video, P.O. Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406, for $425 purchase; $55 rental.)

**Silent Spring.** Rachel Carson, born May 27, 1907, was a biologist and writer whose powerful book *Silent Spring* sounded a warning about the dangers of industrial wastes to the world's ecology. As children delve into studies of nature and conservation, have them also consider the effects of industrial wastes on the environment.

One way to do that is to trace wastes (such as those containing mercury) through a food chain. Let small groups each choose a pollutant that affects a food chain, then make a poster or mobile showing the plants and animals in that chain. Given the movement of pollutants through food chains, as well as by air and water, what conclusions can students draw about the far-reaching implications of pollution? ■

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